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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HOME CARE AGENCY TO PAY ALMOST \$1.5 MILLION TO GOVERNMENT AS PART OF CIVIL SETTLEMENT

Government Alleges Prestige Billed For Home Healthcare Services Rendered By Untrained, Ineligible Providers

PHILADELPHIA – Patrick L. Meehan, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania on behalf of the Office of the Inspector General of the Department of Health and Human Services, today announced a civil settlement between the United States of America and Nursing Home Care Management, Inc. doing business as Prestige Home Care Agency. The settlement provides for the payment to the United States in the amount of \$1,455,968.00 and the entry by Prestige into a corporate integrity agreement to monitor and audit its federally funded health care programs.

This civil settlement arose from an investigation into the eligibility of Prestige's home health care aides. The Medicare program requires that in order to serve as a home health aide, the provider must have successfully completed a minimum of 75 hours of classroom and supervised practical training, addressing such skills as: observation, reporting and documentation of patient status; reading and recording temperature, pulse and respiration; basic infection control procedures and recognizing emergencies and knowledge of emergency procedures. The home health aide is a vital link between homebound patients and their healthcare professionals.

The United States contends that Prestige submitted claims for home health care services that were rendered by home health aides who lacked any training or whose training was inadequate and incomplete.

"This is a serious violation of patient trust," said Meehan. "A homebound patient has no choice but to accept on faith that the individual helping care for them is qualified. In this case, we allege that the provider knowingly sent unqualified and ineligible workers into patients' homes to provide vital healthcare services."

In addition to the payment of \$1,455,968.00, Prestige has agreed to enter into a corporate integrity agreement with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that addresses Prestige's

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participation in and compliance with the Medicare program. This integrity agreement includes five years of independent audits of Prestige's programs.

Prestige denies the Government's allegations and denies that it has any liability relating to these contentions.

This matter was handled by AUSA Margaret L. Hutchinson and Special Agent Peter Freda of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

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